

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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June 15, 1999

The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson, Chair
Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee
State Capitol, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Jackson:

SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL (SB) 1304

The Department of Health Services (Department) is pleased to sponsor SB 1304, which makes statutory changes necessary to allow California's existing environmental laboratory accreditation program to become a recognized accrediting authority for the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP). NELAP, a program of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, will provide a common set of accreditation standards for environmental laboratories nationwide.

The Department currently accredits environmental laboratories that analyze food, drinking water, wastewater, hazardous wastes, and contaminated soils and sediment for regulatory compliance. Under the current program, environmental laboratories that operate in multiple states must obtain multiple accreditations, resulting in the expense and redundancy of multiple proficiency testing studies and on-site assessments. If California becomes a NELAP-recognized accreditation authority, environmental laboratories accredited by California will automatically be accredited in other NELAP-recognized states, providing a competitive edge for California businesses while still maintaining the highest standards. In addition, environmental laboratories accredited in other NELAP-recognized states will automatically be accredited in California.

Participation in NELAP is entirely voluntary and environmental laboratories will have the option of seeking NELAP accreditation according to the federal standards, or continuing to be accredited for California only under the state standards. NELAP-accredited laboratories will always be required to meet the higher of the federal or California standards.

If California does not become NELAP-recognized, out-of state laboratories with NELAP accreditation may find it no longer financially feasible to do business in California. California's participation in NELAP will help ensure the highest environmental laboratory standards while at the same time promoting a competitive business environment.

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Please contact me at (916) 657-2843 if you have any questions or want further information regarding SB 1304.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Charleen M. Milburn
Deputy Director
Legislative and Governmental Affairs